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America Recycles Day Summit
Friday, Nov. 15, 2019
10:00 am to 1:00 pm
U.S. EPA East Building
1301 Constitution Ave., NW , Room 1153
Washington, DC 20004

[HELEN LOWMAN – 10:30 am]

Thank you, Administrator Wright.

And thank you, Carter and Olivia, for all you do.

We're definitely in good hands with next generation environmental stewards like you!

[PAUSE]

I'd also like to extend a special thanks to the EPA, Administrator Wheeler, and his staff for convening today's America Recycles Summit and bringing together so many government, industry, and nonprofit leaders in celebration of America Recycles Day.

[PAUSE]

This year, the themes of America Recycles Day—and America Recycles Week—are Innovation and Partnership.

[PAUSE]

And in partnership with the EPA, we've conducted a series of initiatives this week, highlighting how all Americans from the business community to our armed services are banding together to recycle more—and recycle correctly.

These initiatives – and the progress the America Recycles workgroup members will be sharing today – underscore the important role America Recycles Day plays in educating our citizens about the importance of recycling to our economy and environmental well-being.

[PAUSE]

On Monday, I had the great pleasure to participate in a Veterans Day ceremony at Fort Bliss, in El Paso, Texas with Ken McQueen, the EPA Region 6 Administrator.

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The event honored and recognized the Fort Bliss Recycling Heroes for their commitment to recycling, while celebrating Fort Bliss' successes as a pilot Net Zero Waste installation.

[PAUSE]

Yesterday, the America Recycles Innovation Fair provided a great opportunity to showcase, to the public, advances in recycling technology, product development, and materials usage.

[PAUSE]

I also hope you enjoyed the America Recycles Day Reception after the fair. It was a wonderful way for all of us to get together to share information and connect with one another – whether we're coming from the nonprofit arena, a trade association, or a Fortune 500 company.

[PAUSE]

And you all know, the heartbeat of America Recycles Day is the work of thousands of local organizations across our nation – government institutions, schools, businesses, faith-based organizations, and other community partners, including Keep America Beautiful's own national network of more than 600 community-based affiliates – who are conducting educational workshops and recycling collection events in service to our collective mission to advance recycling.

[PAUSE]

I don't think I need to convince any of you that nothing good happens in this world without some level of partnership.

Since our founding in 1953, Keep America Beautiful has partnered with nonprofits, corporations and government creating social impact through effective tri-sector partnerships.

[PAUSE]

In fact, many of you have partnered with Keep America Beautiful over the years through your support of America Recycles Day and our public space recycling partnerships.

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For example, we've been successfully working with The Coca-Cola Foundation on a public space recycling grant program for years.

And this year, we launched a new public space recycling partnership with Keurig Dr Pepper to provide recycling infrastructure at playgrounds they built in under-invested communities across the nation.

We'll also be piloting public space waterway projects we are initiating this fall in Columbus, Ohio; Louisville, Kentucky; and Jacksonville, Florida.

None of this would be possible without the strong, long-term relationships we've had for decades with our government, corporate, and nonprofit partners.

[PAUSE]

Today's Summit is among the best examples of the value of a tri-sector partnership.

We have before us an opportunity for leaders in the recycled materials economy value chain to share their perspectives on how we can work together – in partnership with each other, along with the federal government – to continue to support efforts to strengthen the U.S. recycling system and craft a national recycling strategy.

[PAUSE]

While there are those who say that the United States is in a "recycling crisis," I believe we are in a "recycling transformation."

And based on today's gathering, there's little doubt in my mind that as we go through this transformation, we'll arrive at a recycling system that works for all Americans.

[PAUSE]

Yes, we need to develop and strengthen markets and infrastructure to meet the changing waste stream and identify a consistent way to measure that progress.

But for Americans, a national challenge presents opportunity.

When necessity calls, Americans find a way.

And recycling is a modern necessity.

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We must do better in our pursuit of creating a circular economy – and we need to do that through a combination of innovation and partnership.

We all have a role to play – producers, consumers, the solid waste industry and many others.

Together, we can lead the planet in responsible consumerism and manage waste for ... not just One More Generation – but for many generations to come.

[PAUSE]

Much of this work has been underway since last America Recycles Day through the Steering Committees.

Today's report-outs will provide us with a preview – an innovation road map – designed to help us capture more of the value of the material in the products we consume, build the collection and processing infrastructure, and continue to grow the marketplace for products made with recycled content – closing the loop.

Market development and the purchasing power of our partners is an important part of promoting and supporting recycling.

[PAUSE]

Before we proceed, I'd like to take a moment to thank the Steering Committee leaders for the four workgroups:

- Education & Outreach: Keep America Beautiful, The Recycling Partnership, and the Sustainable Packaging Coalition
- Infrastructure: Keep America Beautiful, ISRI, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Markets: The Recycling Partnership, South Carolina Department of Commerce, and Waste Management.
- And Measurement: Environmental Research and Education Foundation

[PAUSE]

This is just an example of how we all work together in partnership – YEAR-ROUND – to address this important issue.

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I'm excited to hear about the progress you've made together this past year – and I want to take a moment to thank you all for your ongoing partnership.

[PAUSE – LEAD APPLAUSE]

[PAUSE]

Certainly, what each of our organizations does individually is important. But it's what we do together that can change the world.

Innovation and partnership will be critical as we seek solutions that can improve our recycling infrastructure and processes, as well as the development of new products comprised of post-recycled content that consumers want to purchase.

Based on what we've been seeing during America Recycles Week and today on America Recycles Day, I'd offer that it's clear that Americans and American organizations are stepping up to the task and addressing this challenge head on with American ingenuity.

We look forward to working with you to build a culture of recycling – and a more resilient recycling system.

Thank you.

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Note: OLEM Assistant Administrator Peter Wright will be handling transitions between speakers. There may be one or two Congressional speakers giving brief remarks in the same section of the agenda as Pete Lopez/OMG/Helen, however they are yet unconfirmed so for the moment she will be coming right after OMG (with an introduction from Peter).